



LEAVELL COLLEGE

AT NEW ORLEANS BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

New Religions and Cults LCTH3325
January 2nd-5th

Defend 2024
***Class Location**

Robert B. Stewart
Professor of Philosophy and Theology
Ext #8219

Dodd 112
rstewart@nobts.edu

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course primarily involves the study of major cults in the United States. Attention will be given to the theological and operational characteristics of new religions and cults. The course will focus on The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons), the Watchtower Society (Jehovah's Witnesses), and New Age movements but also include numerous cults and counterfeit Christian groups.

COURSE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the conclusion of the semester, the student will:

1. Understand the history, leadership, doctrines, ethics, and organization of the cults studied through academic study and field observation;
2. Be aware of the significance of these cults for their own members, for Christians, and for the history of religion;
3. Be able to relate more effectively to members of the cults, for discussion and evangelistic witness; and
4. Recognize the new cults which will surely come into expression in the future.

COURSE TEXTS

The following textbooks are **required**:

Watchman Fellowship Profile Notebook. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2000.

<https://www.watchman.org/store/general-topics-doctrine/watchman-fellowships-digital-edition/>

House, H. Wayne. *Charts of Cults, Sects, and Religious Movements*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

The following textbooks are **optional**:

Beckwith, Francis J., Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen. *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

Hanegraaf, Wouter J. *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Albany: SUNY, 1998.

Martin, Walter. *The Kingdom of the Cults*. General Editor, Ravi Zacharias. Grand Rapids: Bethany House, 2013.

McKeever, Bill and Eric Johnson. *Mormonism 101: Examining the Religion of the Latter-day Saints*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.

Newport, John P. Newport. *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Reed, David. *Answering Jehovah's Witnesses Subject by Subject*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Quizzes over the reading in the Watchman Fellowship Profile Notebook. The form of the quizzes will be objective.

2. Book Review. Each student is required to review a book related to the study of cults. It needs to be a book listed by the instructor as suggested texts (excepting House). The review should include: (1) some biographical data concerning the author; (2) an identification of the major elements of content; (3) an assessment of the author's aim or purpose and of the degree of its fulfillment; and (4) a critical evaluation of the book. References to the book being reviewed may be in parentheses; references to other books included in the review should follow Turabian form. **Late work will be penalized 5 points per office day!**

3. Research Project. Do one of the following:

(1) **Cult Visit.** Attend a public worship service of a cult and submit a written report and analysis of the visit. The report should be both a narrative (not a verbatim record) of what occurred during the service. The analysis portion should address what sort of language problems, group behavioral characteristics, or theological differences are observable during the visit. It should also address any significant departures from what the student was expecting based on his or her prior study of the group. The report should be between 5-10 double-spaced pages in length.

(2) **Cult Leader/Member Interview.** Interview either the local leader/minister of one of the cults to be studied or an active, loyal, participating member of the cult. Hopefully the interview will lead to a witnessing encounter with the cult member. (A witnessing encounter is defined as a dialogue which leads to the student sharing the Gospel with the cultist, not simply a dialogue on theological differences or a debate as to which position is correct.) The interview must include a report and analysis of the beliefs and practices in comparison with one's readings and the class lectures on that cult. (See "Cult Visit" section above for instructions as to the report and analysis.) The report should be between 5-10 double-spaced pages in length.

(3) **Doctrinal Overview.** Students will prepare a doctrinal overview comparing the beliefs of a particular cult to orthodox Christianity. Students will then critique those beliefs biblically, with a

mind to rebutting the cult position, and formulate an approach to witnessing to adherents of the chosen cult. The doctrinal overview should not be less than 10 pages nor more than 20 pages.

4. Session Summaries. Each student is required to write one-page, single-spaced summaries of 10 different breakout sessions from the *Defend 2024* Christian Apologetics Conference. Students taking more than one *Defend 2024* course for NOBTS credit may not use any session summaries that they use for another course. Summaries should be submitted via Canvas.

Grades will be determined accordingly:

Quizzes from Profile Notebook	20%
Book Review	20%
Research Project	30%
Session Summaries	30%
Final Grade	100%

Extra Credit may be earned as listed below. All extra credit will be added to the final grade.

(1) Additional Reading. Consideration for extra credit will be given for significant reading over and above the class assignments within the field. Consideration will be given not only to the amount, but also to the quality, of the material read. Students must read all of the assigned readings in order to be eligible to earn extra credit for additional reading.

(2) Additional Book Reviews may be done for extra credit. Reviews must be of a book listed by the instructor for reading reviews unless the instructor has approved another book. Reviews should include: (1) some biographical data concerning the author; (2) an identification of the major elements of content; (3) an assessment of the author's aim or purpose and of the degree of its fulfillment; and (4) a critical evaluation of the book which includes some documented research on the general topic. The reviews should follow Turabian form. Book reviews should be no less than 4 pages and no more than 7 double-spaced pages.

GRADING SCALE

- A: 93 - 100
- B: 85 - 92
- C: 77 - 84
- D: 70 - 76
- F: below 70

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION

1. Attendance Policy: Students must attend all sessions of the Defend 2024 Apologetics Conference unless they have received permission from the professor to miss a portion of it. In cases where students do receive permission to miss a portion of the conference, they will have to do additional work. The professor will determine what a suitable amount of additional work will be.
2. Policy for Late Submissions: **Late Work will be penalized 5 points per office day.**

3. Plagiarism Policy: A high standard of personal integrity is expected of all Leavell College students. Copying another person's work, submitting downloaded material without proper references, submitting material without properly citing the source, submitting the same material for credit in more than one course, committing other such forms of dishonesty, and submitting work produced using Artificial Intelligence are strictly forbidden. *Although anything cited in three sources is considered public domain, we require that all sources be cited.* Any infraction may result in failing the assignment and the course. Any infraction will be reported to the Dean of Leavell College for further action.
4. Classroom and Online Decorum: Each student is expected to demonstrate appropriate Christian behavior. The student is expected to interact with other students in a fashion that will promote learning and respect for the opinions of the others in the course. A spirit of Christian charity is expected at all times. Electronic devices should be used only for classroom purposes as indicated by the professor.
5. Disability Accommodations: Accommodations for students with disabilities are determined and approved by the Assistant Dean of Students for Student Affairs. If you, as a student, believe you are eligible for accommodations but have not obtained approval please contact Conner Hinton immediately at chinton@nobts.edu or 504-816-8246. Students must complete the Accommodation Request Form and provide documentation of their disability. The Assistant Dean of Students notifies students and faculty members of approved academic accommodations and coordinates implementation of those accommodations. While not required, students and faculty members are encouraged to discuss details of the implementation of individual accommodations. The seminary reserves the right to consider each request for special accommodations on a case-by-case basis pursuant to the criteria enumerated above.
6. Emergency Plan: In the event the NOBTS schedule is impacted due to a natural event, go to the seminary's website for pertinent information. Class will continue as scheduled through the Canvas site. Please note announcements and assignments on the course's Canvas site.
7. Technical Assistance: For general NOBTS technical help, go to www.NOBTS.edu/itc/

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beckwith, Francis J. Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, eds., *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.
- Blomberg, Craig L. and Stephen E. Robinson. *How Wide the Divide?: A Mormon & an Evangelical in Conversation*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1997.
- Bowman, Robert M., Jr. *Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989.

- . *Jesus' Resurrection and Joseph's Visions: Examining the Foundations of Christianity and Mormonism*. Tampa: DeWard, 2020.
- . *Understanding Jehovah's Witnesses: Why They Read the Bible the Way They Do*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.
- . *Why You Should Believe in the Trinity: An Answer to Jehovah's Witnesses*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1990.
- Brown, Harold O. J. *The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present*. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1984.
- Countess, Robert H. *The Jehovah's Witnesses' New Testament: A Critical Analysis of the New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*, 2nd. Ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1982.
- Groothuis, Douglas. *Confronting the New Age: How to Resist a Growing Religious Movement*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988.
- . *Revealing the New Age Jesus: Challenges to Orthodox Views of Christ*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990.
- . *Unmasking the New Age*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986.
- Hanegraaf, Wouter J. *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Albany: SUNY, 1998.
- Hoekema, Anthony A. *The Four Major Cults*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963.
- House, H. Wayne, *Charts of Cults, Sects, and Religious Movements*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.
- Magnani, Duane. *The Watchtower Files: Dialogue with a Jehovah's Witness*. Minneapolis: Bethany, 1985.
- Marquardt, Michael H. and Wesley P. Walters. *Inventing Mormonism: Tradition and the Historical Record*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994.
- McKeever, Bill and Eric Johnson, *Mormonism 101: Examining the Religion of the Latter-day Saints*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.
- Beckwith, Francis J., Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, eds., *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.
- Newport, John P. *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Quinn, D. Michael. *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*. Salt Lake City: Signature, 1987.
- Reed, David. *Answering Jehovah's Witnesses Subject by Subject*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.

Rhodes, Ron. *Reasoning from the Scriptures with Jehovah's Witnesses*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2009.

Ropp, Harry L. *Are the Mormon Scriptures Reliable?* Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1987.

Sire, James W. *Scripture Twisting: Twenty Ways the Cults Misread the Bible*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1980.

Tucker, Ruth A. *Another Gospel: Alternative Religions and the New Age Movement*. Grand Rapids: Academie, 1989.

White, James R. *Letters to a Mormon Elder: Eye-Opening Information for Mormons and the Christians Who Talk with Them*. Minneapolis: Bethany, 1993.